INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANS: IMPLEMENTATION, AMENDMENT AND REVIEW

DRAFT

NB:

This is a draft report, subject to ongoing revison. It is also dated -- for example, the Resource Evaluation and Planning Division no longer exists.

Resource Planning Branch
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1. INTRODUCTION

Integrated resource plans (IRPs) are only of value if they are translated into management actions on the ground. "Implementation" is the carrying out of the direction expressed in the approved plan. It can be considered as both the final phase of the integrated resource planning process, and as the first stage of ongoing management.

Plan direction is to be treated in the light of the flexibility expressed in the preface to each plan, which states:

> "This planning document was prepared by involved government agencies and public consultants in recognition of the need for improved management of Alberta's lands and resources. It applies only to public lands within the planning area, and not to any private or federal lands.
>
> "The plan presents the Government of Alberta's resource management policy for the public lands and resources within the area. It is intended to be a guide to resource managers, industry and publics having responsibility or interests in the area rather than a regulatory mechanism. Resource potentials and opportunities for development are identified with a view to assisting in the economic progress of Alberta. The plan is sufficiently flexible so that all future proposals for land use and development may be considered. No legitimate proposals will be categorically rejected. The provincial government is committed to serving Albertans; should a proposal not be in keeping with the provisions of the plan, every means will be taken to explore alternative means for accommodating the proposal in a more appropriate location, either in this planning area or on other public lands. The rejection of any proposals will only be done in writing by the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife or his designate.
>
> "A detailed outline for implementation will be provided for this sub-regional plan in order to identify the necessary implementation actions and roles. This implementation outline will also provide for the continuing review of the plan so that

it may accommodate changing needs and situations. Wherever possible, the private sector will be provided the opportunity to be actively involved in the operational delivery of the plan.

"Implementation is to be subject to normal budgetary approval process. In establishing overall priorities, opportunities in other planning areas and areas currently outside the planning process will be considered.

"While the plan identifies resource potentials and opportunities, the realization of these may require the dedication of major amounts of public funds. The plan will be used on the understanding that any actions required for implementation will be undertaken only as budgetary approvals are given in the normal way. The private sector will be given the first opportunity to provide any development required.

"This plan has no legal status and is subject to revisions or review at the discretion of the Minister."

Planning is a dynamic process that does not end with the approval of the plan document. Plans need to reflect new information, changing environmental and economic conditions and evolving social values.

Part 2 of this document contains an overall statement of principle about public involvement in the post-approval stage. Part 3 describes how to interpret the plan and the general roles, responsibilities and procedures for carrying out and reviewing annually plan implementation including preparation of an implementation document. Part 4 outlines ongoing management procedures for major reviews, updating and amendments necessary to keep integrated resource plans current.

2.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Government of Alberta undertakes to provide appropriate opportunities for involving all interested publics in the review and amendment of integrated resource plans. No distinction is made with respect to the identification of publics. All members of the public with an identified interest, whether individuals or organized groups, are ensured a meaningful level of involvement.

Guidelines for public involvement when plans are reviewed or amended are included in the following sections. The Regional Resource Management Committee (RRMC) will provide for meaningful public involvement opportunities based on its judgement of the need for public reviews of annual reports, housekeeping revisions and amendments, based on considerations such as cost, logistics, the degree of public interest and the level of significance of the review or amendment under consideration.

3. INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Interpretation of the Plan

A plan is not a rigid statutory document, but a guide for resource managers, industry and the public. As the plan cannot possibly anticipate all future management possibilities, using it requires intelligent interpretation.

In assessing development proposals and other referrals, the whole plan, especially the intents and objectives, must be understood. Serious misinterpretation can occur if the guidelines, zoning or summary tables are used rigidly and in isolation. In particular, the scale of planning must be considered. Sub-regional plans are typically mapped at a scale of 1:100 000. Zones generally do not follow legal boundaries, but ecological ones, which are in reality imprecise. Mapping accuracy and zone imprecision must be considered along with the purpose of the zones in any field interpretation.

In carrying out the review of disposition applications and other referrals related to development proposals, all staff should interpret the plan in the light of flexible approach expressed in the plan preface (see Section 1). Consistency with the plan may be determined by:

- understanding the overall intents, objectives and other plan contents for the area;
- comparing the proposal against zoning and guidelines specific to the location and kind of activity proposed; and
- where no guideline or zoning specifically applies to the proposal, the more general direction contained in objectives and intents should be relied upon.

Where a proposal is not consistent with the plan, staff should:

- wherever possible, explore alternative means or locations for carrying out the proposal; and

- where no accommodation can be found; recommend to the Minister the rejection of the application.

When an application is rejected because of inconsistency with a plan, an application to amend the plan (Section 4.1.2) may be considered.

3.2 Responsibility

Overall responsibility for plan implementation rests with the Regional Resource Management Committee(s) for the region(s) in which the planning area is located. In particular, they are responsible for:

- preparing and approving the implementation document as soon as practical following plan approval;
- establishing the work program to meet plan commitments, including priorities and schedules;
- monitoring work accomplishment and plan compliance; and
- reporting accomplishment and compliance to senior management and the public as appropriate.

In carrying out their responsibilities, the RRMC should be extended as necessary to include representatives of other affected agencies.

While the RRMC oversees the operational implementation of the IRP, specific responsibilities for doing the work itself remain with the responsible agencies, both in the region and in head office. In particular, operational delivery rests with regional line agencies while program management and policy development remain head office functions.

3.3 Content of the Implementation Document

For each completed integrated resource plan, an implementation document will be prepared to identify implementation commitments and intentions by resource management agencies in terms of the following:

1. Restrictions and guidelines on the granting of dispositions and other inter-agency referrals contained in the plan. While this information is already found in the plan itself, it needs to be expressed in a form convenient for day-to-day referrals.

2. Specific projects that are either identified in the plan, or are required to fulfill the objectives contained in the plan (the work program). The document is not intended to be a complete description of established program delivery.

3.4 Annual Review

The RRMC is responsible for producing an annual review of each integrated resource plan in its region. The annual review date will be established by the RRMC following Cabinet committee approval of the IRP based upon such considerations as scheduling reviews with other IRPs or the fiscal year. Guidelines for this annual review procedure are as follows:

1. The RRMC will review the past year's work, noting what was expected to be accomplished and what was in fact achieved. Any discrepancies or changes will be addressed.

2. The RRMC will revise the work program as necessary to reflect any variations from the expected achievements in previous years, any new programs or initiatives, any deletions from proposed programs, or any other significant changes in key variables affecting the achievement of the work program. In particular, completed projects will be dropped and priorities, proposed start dates and expected completion dates will be revised.

3. The RRMC will review the integrated resource plan and make housekeeping revisions as necessary. The results of the completed review of the plan will be described in an annual report.

4. The RRMC will send the annual report to the Resource Management Division Heads Committee (RMDHC) for review and comment, and to the RIC (Resource Integration Committee) and the RMDC (Resource Management Directors Committee) for information.

5. A summary of the annual report may be made available to the public, to be distributed to interested persons and organizations. In rare instances, a public review of progress in plan implementation may be appropriate.

4. ONGOING MANAGEMENT OF INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANS

4.1 Changing Integrated Resource Plans

The following procedures for changing provisions of an approved integrated resource plan distinguish between housekeeping revisions, with essentially no policy content, and amendments, which have significant implications.

4.1.1 Housekeeping Revisions

1. Housekeeping revisions are non-contentious corrections or updates, for which no public discussion or senior management endorsement is considered necessary. They may include the following typically occurring situations:

   - a correction or editorial clarification;

   - addition, deletion or modification of a guideline that defines a work program component, where a plan objective can more effectively be met in a way other than that currently prescribed;

   - minor adjustment of any plan provisions to ensure compliance with a new policy, regulation or act.

2. The RRMC is responsible for making housekeeping revisions.

3. Suggestions for housekeeping revisions should be brought to the attention of the appropriate regional resource co-ordinator (RRC).

4. The RRMC will include a description of all housekeeping revisions in the annual report of the plan and in annual progress reports made available to the general public.

4.1.2 Amendments

1. **Amendments include all changes to the plan that are not considered housekeeping. Amendments include the modification of an objective or guideline that results in a significant change to the allowed resource uses or to the priority given to resource uses in all or part of the planning area.**

2. Application to amend an approved integrated resource plan should be made to the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Resource Evaluation and Planning Division (REAP).

3. In case of any doubt, the ADM, REAP will determine whether a proposed change constitutes a housekeeping revision or an amendment.

4. The ADM, REAP, in consultation with the Deputy Minister, the Minister and affected agencies, will:

   - determine whether or not to accept the application for amendment;

   - communicate the decision to the applicant; and

   - determine the appropriate level of public involvement for accepted applications, based on significance of the proposed amendment and expected level of interest.

5. All accepted applications for amendment will be circulated to interested agencies within the government on an interdepartmental referral coordinated by the Resource Planning Branch, Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

6. The results of the interdepartmental referral and of any public involvement will be summarized and forwarded along with a recommendation to the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife for a decision. Amendments which entail a major policy decision may be forwarded to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Planning for decision.

4.2 Major Plan Review

Over time, integrated resource plans eventually become out of date, in more fundamental ways than can be resolved by individual plan amendments. At that time, a major plan review and revision is required. The need for review will depend upon many factors, including:

- completion of most of the identified work program;
- major changes in resource use and demand in the area; and
- evolving government policy.

Each year as the Resource Integration Committee reviews plan priorities, it will assess the need for plan reviews and propose revisions to the draft planning program to the Minister.

A major plan review is conducted according to the normal planning and approval process, and may revise any aspect of the integrated resource plan. The review will ensure that the integrated resource plan reflects current provincial and regional policy direction and that the ongoing implementation of integrated resource plans is generally consistent from planning area to planning area and from region to region.

Major plan reviews will incorporate public involvement on the same basis as the public is involved in the development of new integrated resource plans.